

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2004**

COMMITTEE John R. Byers, Mount Vernon District
MEMBERS Frank A. de la Fe, Hunter Mill District
PRESENT: Rodney L. Lusk, Lee District
 Peter F. Murphy, Jr., Springfield District

STAFF PRESENT: Barbara J. Lipka, Executive Director, Planning Commission Office
 Heidi Baggett, Associate Clerk to the Planning Commission Office
 David B. Marshall, Assistant Director, Planning Division, Department of
 Planning and Zoning

OTHERS James R. Hart, Commissioner At-large
PRESENT: Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District

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Chairman Peter F. Murphy, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m., indicating that the purpose of the meeting was to prepare motions for the Commission's markup on the FY 2005 – FY 2009 Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

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Commissioner de la Fe noted that he would start the discussion with three comments. The first, he said, was that the document kept improving each year, and second, that it might be time, without affecting the AAA bond rating, to revisit the \$200 million bond limit that the County self-imposes due to the current low interest rates. There was discussion among committee members about how to accomplish that, and if agreed upon, they decided that it could be a separate motion to the Board of Supervisors, along with the CIP recommendations.

Commissioner de la Fe also indicated that his third comment related to raising the issue of infrastructure, which had been raised before the Board in the past. He gave his thought that the Planning Commission, if they intended to address the issue (referring to a copy of the memo that the Park Authority had sent him), should know that infrastructure constitutes about twenty-five percent of the expense of any new park. The Commissioners agreed that it was a loss against the total amount planned for these projects.

Commissioner de la Fe offered the example of Stratton Woods Park in Hunter Mill District. He said there was \$1.2 million in the Park fund to develop that park, which included the parking lot, and all park facilities. The site plan called for a turn lane and four lanes at Fox Mill Road, and if developer costs were counted, the project cost was projected at more than the \$1.2 million. He explained that money was also taken from Lake Fairfax and that Supervisor Hudgins was able to get some VDOT funds for recreation improvements and that it took over \$750,000 to finish it. Otherwise, he commented, the park would not have been built this year. Another example, he said, was the recreation center at Spring Hill where two lanes were added along with a turn lane

at the traffic light. He said his recommendation applied specifically to the park bond, but would also apply to the library bond for building Oakton Library since lanes would have to be added to Hunter Mill Road. He suggested that the Commission either add funds to those two bonds or to the transportation bond that would be going to the voters, but specifically for infrastructure costs.

A discussion followed regarding various bonds that were coming up and whether they would be separate votes. Through further discussion, the specific bonds were identified as transportation, parks, libraries, and human services slated for the Fall of 2004, and would be voted on as four individual referenda.

Commissioner Byers asked what was proposed for the budget at that time, since Commissioner de la Fe was proposing to up the ante on the park bond referendum to \$70 - \$75 million. Commissioner de la Fe acknowledged that the amount was currently at \$50 million and that only \$7 million of the \$50 million would go toward new park development, which would only fund one park. He said it would have taken care of Stratton Woods and part of Lake Fairfax, but road improvements had to be added. He said it was a tradeoff and he had told the Park Authority that he was not going to be as insistent as in the past because another bond for parks was scheduled in 2008, which, in effect, was a shorter timeframe. He also stated that the \$50 million was being plugged in the same way the school system was plugged in at \$350 million every other year. He noted that bonds were generally included in election cycles with the highest voter turnout.

David Marshall, Assistant Director, Department of Planning and Zoning, stated that the County had been trying to get park bonds on a fairly regular sequence with one in 1998 and one in 2002. When asked by Commissioner Byers if those funds were expended, Mr. Marshall replied that they had started with \$75 million in 1998, and as of June 2003, there was \$30 million remaining. The Committee members discussed the timing of the projected bond sales.

Mr. Marshall remarked that DPZ might do a total project cost estimate on the libraries. He said DPZ usually did include infrastructure improvements but the task would be made much simpler by using a prototype of a fire station or library, because the estimators would know exactly what to do with those sites. Further, he stated, the Department of Transportation costs were also factored into those estimates.

There was debate among the Committee members about what amount to ask for and Commissioner Byers mentioned that there were 1998 bonds left that had not been sold. Commissioner de la Fe acknowledged that they would now have to be sold.

Commissioner Hart commented that the objective should be to pass all the bonds and to avoid controversy. He noted that citizens seldom campaigned against park bonds, but that transportation bonds could be more controversial. He informed the committee of some very militant people to the west who always expressed concerns over transportation bonds whether it was the Tri-County Connector, the Western Bypass, or some outer beltway issue. He said these protestors would be at every public meeting handing out flyers against any type of new road construction. Chairman Murphy asked if these people lived in Fairfax County, to which Commissioner Hart explained that they come to Fairfax County, but were generally Prince William, Fauquier, and Middleburg citizens from the Gatepost Estates area. He said there were, in particular, a couple of neighborhoods tuned in as "anti-road," which meant there was a likelihood that people would be campaigning against a transportation bond. He further

commented that rather than split it into a transportation bond, it might be less controversial to address it as a park issue. Even though, he offered, there would be infrastructure costs, it would be less controversial that way.

Chairman Murphy agreed with that rationale, but stated that legislation was being pushed and that there was probably a danger for the whole bond process for 2004. Commissioner de la Fe agreed that the request should not be pushed to the point of possible failure even though park bonds have never failed. He noted that even school bonds had been turned down previously. There was further discussion about various rejected bonds and which might be challenged.

Chairman Murphy asked if the Commission could just state that they wanted to raise the ceiling to \$70 million with the current ceiling and proposed referenda in place. Mr. Marshall noted that the referenda amount could be increased but that there was a \$200 million per year cap on bond sales. He said that \$130 million is currently planned for schools and \$79 million for County projects, including parks. Also, after looking at the referenda total in the document, he said that there was about another \$684 million projected for bond sales without increasing anything. So, he commented, unless the \$200 million was bumped up, which he thought it probably could be, that was just a Board policy that could be amended. Mr. Marshall also commented that Commissioner Alcorn had mentioned a ten percent element, which is the ratio of debt service to general funds. That is the key criteria, he said, that bonding agencies look at when granting the AAA bond rating and that we should stay under that ten percent of our ratio of debt service to general fund disbursements. He noted that the County is currently at about the eight percent limit. There is room to increase that ratio, he added, but he did not know how that equated to dollars. Furthermore, he said, the Board does not like to bump it right to ten percent. Commissioner de la Fe agreed that room in the percentage was needed in case of an emergency. Mr. Marshall commented that it was all obviously based on planning numbers and a vision of future happenings and an effort to be conservative, but he would expect some flexibility to permit an increase to the \$200 million limit. There followed some discussion about projects that had been approved unexpectedly.

Chairman Murphy wondered if there would be a ripple affect if they asked for \$60 million. Commissioner Byers suggested they return to Commissioner de la Fe's adjustment and explore it to see how the market would deal with an increase.

Commissioner Byers suggested increasing the amount to \$75 million. Commissioner de la Fe acknowledged that he could justify \$70 - \$75 million based on the infrastructure costs and stated that he had always wanted to get to \$100 million bonding level for the parks.

Chairman Murphy questioned the twenty-five percent cost for infrastructure and whether it was for the roads inside the projects. Commissioner de la Fe responded that it did not include the parking lots but did include curbs and sidewalks. He confirmed that it was very costly to meet VDOT standards.

Commissioner de la Fe said that he wanted to recommend to the Commission an increase in the Park Authority bond referendum by \$20 million. Chairman Murphy asked Mr. Marshall to work on the motions and send it to him via e-mail the next day.

Commissioner de la Fe remarked that he was at the budget meeting on Monday because he had

to attend a Pedestrian Task Force meeting that same day. He stated that there was actually money available in the 3rd quarter to distribute, some of which would go for street lights. When asked how much was available, he responded that there was \$3 million and an additional \$2.3 million to be distributed, which totaled approximately \$6 million.

There was some further discussion among the Committee on upcoming projects.

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The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Peter F. Murphy, Jr., Chairman

For a verbatim record of this meeting, reference may be made to the audio recording which can be found in the Office of the Planning Commission of Fairfax County, Virginia.

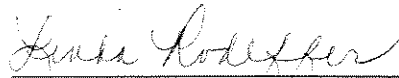
Meeting taken by: Heidi Baggett

Minutes by: Norma Duncan

Approved administratively on

July 1, 2004

Approved by:



Linda Rodeffer, Clerk

Fairfax County Planning Commission